



ALASKA ROADLESS RULEMAKING: SUMMARY OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS

CONTEXT

USDA Forest Service published a Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Alaska Roadless Rule in the *Federal Register* on August 30, 2018. The Notice of Intent initiated a 45-day scoping period which ended on October 15, 2018. During this timeframe, the Forest Service and State of Alaska collaboratively conducted 17 public meetings (i.e., scoping meetings) including Anchorage, AK; Washington, DC; and 14 communities across Southeast Alaska – Angoon, Craig, Gustavus, Hoonah, Kake, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Point Baker, Sitka, Tenakee Springs, Thorne Bay, Wrangell, Yakutat, and two meetings in Juneau.

SCOPING MEETING OVERVIEW

Public scoping meetings included presentations by both the Forest Service and State of Alaska followed by question and answer session and open discussion via open house format. The Forest Service presentation included an overview of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, roadless rulemaking regulatory process, rationale for state-specific roadless rule, proposed Alaska Roadless Rule (in concept only), public participation, public participation venues, federal-state partnership, and next steps. The State of Alaska presentation addressed the State of Alaska's petition, the State of Alaska-Forest Service agreement, cooperating agency status, and the governor-appointed Citizen Advisory Committee. All scoping public meetings included an array of reference materials including multiple Tongass National Forest maps, Notice of Intent hardcopies, 2001 Roadless Rule reference guide, roadless area characteristics summary document, public participation guide, and question and answer fact sheet.

Public scoping meetings generally occurred at common places for community meetings – primarily recommended by community leaders. Total participation varied by community. Of noteworthy importance, Juneau (Meeting 2), Gustavus, and Thorne Bay were added to the schedule by either community request, senior Forest Service staff recommendation, or stakeholder group special request. In total, public scoping meetings were conducted in 44 percent of Southeast Alaska communities (14) including rural and urban communities, indigenous villages, and lifestyle communities (Table 1). An additional two meetings were conducted in Anchorage, AK and Washington, DC.

Table 1.
Public Scoping Meetings*

| Southeast Alaska |
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| Juneau, Meeting 1 |
| Juneau, Meeting 2 |
| Ketchikan |
| Sitka |
| Wrangell |
| Petersburg |
| Yakutat |
| Hoonah |
| Angoon |
| Kake |
| Thorne Bay |
| Tenakee Springs |
| Gustavus |
| Point Baker |
| Craig |
| Other |

*Meetings also conducted in Washington, DC and Anchorage, AK



SCOPING MEETING SUMMARY

In total, 17 public scoping meetings were conducted in 16 locations with nearly half (44%) of all Southeast Alaska communities serving as venue for a public scoping meeting. Public meetings were also conducted in Anchorage, Alaska and Washington, District of Columbia. While key issues, specific concerns, and questions varied by community based on local geography and current local issues, the majority of public meetings affirmed support for the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, highlighted mistrust for the State of Alaska, questioned the relationship between the State of Alaska and Forest Service, and reinforced the *2016 Tongass Land and Resource Management Plan* and the collaborative effort that guided the 2016 forest plan amendment. Table 2 includes additional information, by community, related to public meeting substantive discussion, questions, and local concerns. In Southeast Alaska, only two of fourteen communities (e.g., Thorne Bay, Wrangell) were largely receptive to Alaska roadless rulemaking – both of which seemingly preferred a full exemption of the 2001 Roadless Rule. Of noteworthy importance, sentiment expressed at public meetings represent the opinions of perspectives of meeting participants and is not generalizable to the full local population.

Table 2. Public Scoping Meeting Summary (N = 17)

| Meeting | Date | Location | Attendance Estimate | Discussion Summary: Key Issues, Concerns, and Questions |
|---------|---------|------------------|---------------------|---|
| 1 | 9/13/18 | Juneau Meeting 1 | 75 | <p>Opening presentations completed with minimal questioning of presentation content. Overall, this was the first of seventeen meetings and warmup for the Alaska Roadless Rule interdisciplinary team. The crowd was primarily comprised of recreation and tourism interests and conservation group members – especially Southeast Alaska Conservation Council. The overall tone of the meeting was critical of roadless rulemaking and the proposed Alaska Roadless Rule. Attendees were also critical of the State of Alaska's rationale behind the petition and underlying motivation for the petition. While a few timber industry members were present at the meeting, they remained silent. There were a variety of comments and questions related to the level or depth of analysis that would be conducted, especially on wildlife and tourism effects. There were also questions regarding miles of existing roads and maintenance needed and the cost of maintenance.</p> |
| 2 | 9/17/18 | Ketchikan | 45 | <p>It was difficult to complete presentations, both State of Alaska and Forest Service, due to ongoing questioning. The general tone of the meeting was significant cynicism regarding Alaska Roadless Rulemaking project and the State of Alaska's underlying motivation. Lengthy discussion occurred regarding mistrust of the State of Alaska and now the Forest Service. Some attendees highlighted basis for mistrust – stating the Forest Service was now in collusion with the State of Alaska. Several attendees were very critical of timber export and dominated the discussion portion of the meeting. Other attendees were very critical of tribal outreach and consultation efforts citing expedited timelines, untenable timeframes, and little to no prior tribal consultation prior to the publishing of the Notice of Intent. Few timber industry representatives attended the meeting, but remained silent.</p> <p>Sharing Idaho as an example seemed to help explain some options during small group discussion. It was also helpful to observe the state forester combat the notion the Forest Service is "in collusion" with the State of Alaska by indicating the state has pursued a full exemption since the promulgation of the 2001 Roadless Rule using three methods – litigation, legislation, and now administrative rulemaking. This talking point was used frequently in the public meetings that followed by both the State of Alaska and Forest Service. It placed, into perspective, the State of Alaska has long-believed (and acted upon) the belief the 2001 Roadless Rule creates undue hardship for the timber industry, rural jobs, and Southeast Alaska communities.</p> <p>Several attendees expected to give oral public comments. IDT members recommended adjusting the introduction to ensure attendees understand objectives of scoping meeting and appropriate method for submitting comment. PPTX presentation adjusted to highlight email address in the "How to Comment" slide.</p> |



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| 3 | 9/17/18 | Hoonah | 12 | <p>The majority of the public meeting was dominated by discussion regarding access, roads associated with powerlines, and geothermal resources. Meeting participants expressed a desire to have multiple communities connected and cited the social value of connecting communities for schools and businesses. There was also discussion regarding utilizing a coordinator for a power line running from Hoonah to Pelican.</p> |
| 4 | 9/18/18 | Craig | 24 | <p>Critical crowd with significant concern regarding tribal consultation and overall timeline. Additional concerns related to State of Alaska's Forest Management Practices Act, prior Alaska Native Corporation harvest, and effects on the future of tribal communities. One timber industry representative attended the meeting and indicated the region needs a solution, driven by local needs and input, instead of having the future decided by courts. This individual spoke out, as a minority voice in the room, noting that he would rather have a solution that is driven by local needs and perspectives rather than a solution delivered by outsiders – despite the discussion being fraught with difficulty at local level.</p> <p>Overall, the meeting contained representatives from three tribes and multiple rural communities. There was significant mistrust and trepidation regarding roadless rulemaking on the heels of the 2016 forest plan amendment. Many attending had participated in the 2016 forest plan amendment or more recent Prince of Wales Landscape Level Analysis (POWLAT) and were simply weary of forest planning efforts, NEPA project participation, and monitoring agency public land management.</p> <p>The three attending tribal representatives were unified in their criticism of the overall timeline, State of Alaska motivation, and the Forest Service not honoring government-to-government relationships and prior notice requirements. Their concerns largely overshadowed other discussion of the Alaska Roadless Rulemaking project.</p> <p>There was significant discussion around Tongass National Forest maps that highlighted some concerns regarding effects of roadless rulemaking being concentrated at Prince of Wales Island instead of spreading across the region – and that the island needs to continue its recovery from industrial scale logging.</p> |
| 5 | 9/18/18 | Angoon | 10 | <p>Attendees questioned the rationale and motivation behind the State of Alaska's petition. What are other Tribes asking about this? Issues around subsistence rights. How is this effected by Title 29 annexation issues (state statute)? Why is the 2001 Roadless Rule not sufficient, concern about targeting timber harvest in old growth areas. Tongass 77 areas should not be impacted. Timeline is too short for the state committee. Why is the Tongass Advisory Committee work not sufficient?</p> |
| 6 | 9/19/18 | Point Baker | 16 | <p>Less than 30 people reside in Point Baker and it is likely all those present in the community that particular day attended the meeting. Extremely critical crowd with consensus opposition to roadless rulemaking. Several Port Protection community members also attended – arriving via small boat.</p> <p>Very critical of State of Alaska's roadless rulemaking motivation and the state's Citizen Advisory Committee process. Sentiment also expressed regarding prior lack of accommodation, for Point Baker, by both the Forest Service and State of Alaska in their respective forest planning and project efforts. Very knowledgeable regarding the 2001 Roadless Rule and National Forest Management Act and do not feel roadless rulemaking should be pursued. Furthermore, that roadless rulemaking threatens the recent 2016 forest plan amendment and is disrespectful of the collaborative effort that informed the amendment. Highly concerned regarding the impacts of timber harvest and road construction and what it means for their community, especially the lands north of road 20.</p> <p>Due to the small group and informal nature of the community, the Forest Service and State of Alaska opted to deviate from formal presentations and deliver information via structured group discussion. Questions were ongoing and allowed the majority of content to be covered. The majority of time was spent criticizing the State of Alaska's underlying motivation for Alaska roadless rulemaking, compiling the Citizen Advisory Committee on short notice, and taking advantage of changing administrations to undermine a conservation rule that has worked in Southeast Alaska.</p> |



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| 7 | 9/19/18 | Tenakee Springs | 29 | <p>Meeting attendees were generally skeptical to open opposition to the Alaska Roadless Rulemaking project. Questions arose regarding the State of Alaska's underlying motivation behind the petition. There was also inquiry regarding the tribal government perspective on Alaska roadless rulemaking. Significant concern arose regarding subsistence rights and the potential impact to subsistence resources. There was also concern regarding any impact, or interference, of Alaska Statute Title 29 (municipal government statutes annexation rights). There were also many comments regarding the potential impact to salmon and the value of salmon for local working communities.</p> <p>In summary, meeting participants generally questioned why the 2001 Roadless Rule was not sufficient, expressed concern about targeting timber harvest in old growth areas, requested Tongass 77 areas not be impacted, indicated the timeline is too short for the state's Citizen Advisory Committee, and advocated that the Tongass Advisory Committee's prior work should be sufficient.</p> <p>Notably, Tenakee Springs was not an original meeting location as planned by the Forest Service, but was later added by recommendation of a local logging and milling company and follow-up request by the city government.</p> |
| 8 | 9/20/18 | Juneau Meeting 2 | 55 | <p>This meeting was a requested addition to the meeting schedule by Southeast Conference due to prior scheduling conflict with their annual meeting – a second meeting was not originally planned for Juneau, but was easily accommodated due to overall timing.</p> <p>Meeting participants were generally a critical crowd where the majority of people who asked questions or provided input opposed the Alaska Roadless Rulemaking project. Recreation/tourism industry comprised wide majority of attendees and were very critical of State of Alaska motivation and Forest Service actions regarding roadless rulemaking. Only one observed timber industry advocate attended, but largely remained silent.</p> <p>Significant technical questions arose regarding how rulemaking would affect transition to young growth and why rulemaking was needed to implement the 2016 forest plan amendment and the associated transition from old to young growth timber harvest.</p> |
| 9 | 9/21/18 | Gustavus | 40 | <p>Critical crowd with large majority, likely full consensus, in opposition to the Alaska Roadless Rulemaking project. Highly-suspicious of the underlying motivation behind the State of Alaska's petition and why other interests are being ignored including tourism, climate change, recreation, and subsistence resources. Several concerns raised about whether LUD II areas would be affected. Lengthy discussion regarding the limited value of the timber industry in Southeast Alaska and the export of timber overseas.</p> <p>Notably, Gustavus was not an original meeting location as planned by the Forest Service, but was later added by request of the city government.</p> |
| 10 | 9/24/18 | Wrangell | 20 | <p>A friendlier crowd in the sense the majority participating in the discussion indicated the Forest Service is not doing enough to support the timber industry. Former Government Murkowski provided a "statement" and submitted it for the record. Others were supportive of the exemption from the 2001 Roadless Rule and revision of forest plan to allow for timber industry growth. Perspectives discussed during later small group discussion were more tempered, indicated the community could not support a timber industry and the economic drivers for the community now the shipyard, hospital, wilderness camp, and tourism. Notably, the last sawmill in Wrangell was dismantled and shipped to China for scrap metal during 2017.</p> |



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| | | | | <p>This was an informed crowd. Meeting attendees asked good and informed questions. Most comments focused on increased protection for the Tongass National Forest and that the Alaska Roadless Rulemaking project was “rigged” as evidenced by the short timeline – and, that the driver is NOT economics as evidenced by small timber industry, vibrant seafood industry, and exploding tourism industry growth. Participants recommended analysis needs to include climate change differences between now and 2001, stream temperature changes, and overall fish habitat quality.</p> |
| 11 | 9/24/18 | Sitka | 80 | <p>Economics was a focal point of the meeting and questions arose regarding whether there would be an economics report – not just timber economics. Trade off questions for economic effects were presented. Greenpeace attended the meeting, recorded the presentation, and raised issues regarding the cumulative effects of climate change and the value of intact forests in mediating the impacts of climate change. There was discussion around ensuring the value of intact forests is fully accounted for in the effects analysis – a full accounting of the value of trees beyond a timber sale value.</p> <p>Small group discussion occurred afterwards with one conversation related to hydropower sources and the related development permits that may be needed at a later date.</p> |
| 12 | 9/25/18 | Petersburg | 30 | <p>Critical crowd that questioned the intent behind the State of Alaska’s petition and roadless rulemaking, timber export, timber economics, and undervaluation of tourism economic impacts. Meeting participants questioned whether there can be a compromise solution if the State of Alaska does not get the full exemption it seeks. A significant amount of time was used by the State of Alaska to provide an overview of the justification for the petition and also ongoing concern regarding the economic well-being of Southeast Alaska – primarily overarching themes related to ongoing efforts to limit perceived federal overreach and empowering Alaskans to design a solution that works for Southeast Alaska. Several questions arose that were outside the scope of roadless rulemaking and were effectively postponed for further conversation in small groups during the open house session of the meeting.</p> |
| 13 | 9/25/18 | Yakutat | 15 | <p>Meeting participant input centered on access challenges, especially to geographic areas adjacent to wilderness areas and the need for trail and other access to beachfront areas. A couple of comments supported access to more timber.</p> |
| 14 | 9/27/18 | Anchorage, AK | 35 | <p>Meeting participants at the Anchorage meeting echoed the same sentiments and concerns heard elsewhere – mainly, suspicions regarding the State of Alaska’s underlying motivation for the petition and their expected public process. Unlike other prior scoping meetings, there were mining interests in attendance, but they did not engage in public discussion.</p> <p>Appeared to be a “sub-group” of individuals that had similar talking points, likely developed by an environmental group, that was used for many comments and questions.</p> |
| 15 | 10/3/18 | Washington, DC | 100 | <p>Larger and different group that the Forest Service originally anticipated. Instead of just local lobbyist types, there was also a fairly large number of protestors (outside and inside) with signs; not all could enter the room at the same time due to overall room capacity limited to approximately 75 individuals. Notably, some Alaska residents traveled to DC to attend the meeting and provide comments – in opposition of Alaska roadless rulemaking and in support of the 2001 Roadless Rule. In total, it is estimated 100 individuals attended the meeting with the room capacity at 75 individuals with another 25 attendees rotating in and out of the room, as capacity space allowed.</p> |
| 16 | 10/9/18 | Thorne Bay | 12 | <p>This was a friendlier crowd that was generally amenable to Alaska roadless rulemaking. The presentations were well-received and attendees appeared to be appreciative of introductory materials related to Alaska roadless rulemaking. Several were opposed to federal public land management, in general, while others had more specific input regarding surrounding Forest Service lands.</p> |



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| | | | | <p>The large majority of attendees, likely full consensus, were opposed to the Alaska Roadless Rulemaking project. Due to the opening tone of the meeting and the desire of tribal members to share their experiences and history in public land management, the formal presentations were quickly abandoned in favor of more informal discussion regarding salient points – by both the State of Alaska and the Forest Service.</p> |
| 17 | 10/10/18 | Kake | 15 | <p>While Kake is interested in road access connecting Portage Bay, they reinforced the expanse of their traditional and ancestral lands and the protection the 2001 Roadless Rule provides them. They were highly suspect of the State of Alaska and the agreement between the State of Alaska and the Forest Service. They reiterated their perspective that the Forest Service has not fulfilled government-to-government consultation as evidenced by overall timeline, limited outreach, and insufficient tribal input prior to publishing of Notice of Intent in the Federal Register. Tribal members also provided reminder of the past objectives and litigation originated by the Organized Village of Kake.</p> |